

Approved For Release 2000/08/08 : CIA-RDP96-00788R002100450005-6

Hostages Tell of Abuses; Carter Decries 'Barbarism'

Ex-President Declares 52 True Heroes

Says Suffering Worse
Than He Had Known

By Phil Galley
Washington Star Staff Writer

WIESBADEN, West Germany — Former President Jimmy Carter held a tearful reunion yesterday with the 52 freed American hostages, embracing each and calling them "true heroes" who had suffered physical and mental torture far worse than he had previously believed.

Carter, acting as President Reagan's emissary, came away from his meeting with the Americans at the U.S. Air Force hospital here "clearly outraged," as an aide put it, by the stories of mistreatment they told.

"One very serious fact is becoming evident," Carter told a news conference, "and that is that our Americans in Iran were mistreated much worse than has been previously revealed. The acts of barbarism which were perpetrated on our people by Iran can never be condoned."

Some of the former U.S. officials traveling with Carter said that placing the hostages before mock firing squads apparently had been a more common occurrence than they had realized from the reports received through diplomatic channels. But beyond that, they refused to provide specifics.

For Carter, who was deprived of the opportunity of greeting the liberated Americans as president by a last-minute snag in the negotiations with Iran, the meeting was the emotional climax to the 444-day crisis that haunted the last days of his presidency.

Ironically, one of the first sights Carter saw upon his arrival at the hospital was a quotation from the inaugural address of Ronald Reagan, who took the oath as president only 33 minutes before the first plane load of hostages left Tehran for freedom.

A large banner draped from the third-floor balcony read: "You're free. After all—we are Americans."

Behind the banner some of the former hostages — now referred to as "returnees" — stood in sub-freezing weather to greet Carter with waves and, in the case of one Marine braving the night air in a T-shirt, a sharp salute.

After a briefing from hospital officials, Carter went to a meeting

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United Press International

Returnee Bruce Laingen of Bethesda and former President Jimmy Carter embrace at Wiesbaden.

Reagan Holds Off on Pact Until He Reads Fine Print

Rejection of Deal Said to Be Unlikely

By Walter Taylor
Washington Star Staff Writer

Officials said yesterday the Reagan administration will review the fine print on the hostage agreement with Iran before deciding whether to honor its provisions.

Spokesmen at both the White House and the State Department held out the option of repudiating one or more elements of the agreement hammered out by U.S. negotiators in the closing hours of the Carter administration.

Privately, officials of the new administration said it was unlikely that President Reagan would abro-

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Last-Minute Iranian Hitch Said Legitimate

Star Wire Services

WIESBADEN, West Germany — Former officials of the Carter administration yesterday said that they are convinced Iran "had a legitimate gripe" in raising last-minute questions that delayed release of the 52 American hostages until after Jimmy Carter was out of office.

And they publicly urged the Reagan administration to honor terms of the agreement with Iran.

On the flight here, where Carter held an emotional meeting with the released hostages, former U.S. officials traveling with him described the last agonizing hours of the hostage negotiations.

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Haig Approved For State Post On 93-6 Vote

By a vote of 93 to 6, Alexander M. Haig Jr. won confirmation from the Senate yesterday as secretary of state.

But there was political skirmishing between Capitol Hill and the White House on President Reagan's first full day in office.

Even while they were welcoming Vice President George Bush, the new president of the Senate, sen-

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ators on both sides of the aisle were warning they would keep their independence and exert pressure on the White House when they felt it necessary.

Senate Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, who voted against the nomination, complained

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One Calls His Captors 'Psychotic'

Torture Was Physical, Mental, Families Told

By Maureen Dowd
and Suzanne Bilelo
Washington Star Staff Writers

Some of the freed American hostages yesterday told of physical and psychological abuse at the hands of their Iranian captors.

Life as a hostage was not full of the "luxury hotels" and medical specialists that Iranian officials bragged about or the cordial guards and overflowing bowls of fruit like those seen in the Christmas films, the former hostages said in transatlantic telephone calls from West Germany to relatives and friends in the United States.

It was full of physical abuse and mental torture.

Instead of hotels, there were SAVAK (former Iranian secret police) prisons and isolation cells in dank basements that prisoners nicknamed "Mushroom Inns."

There were guards who played Russian roulette with female hostages, held mock executions and conducted midnight raids, wearing white masks and fatigues and carrying automatic rifles.

At the U.S. Air Force hospital in Wiesbaden, West Germany, Frederick "Rick" Kupke savored the feeling of slipping between crisp white sheets for the first time in 14 months and remembered his hard cot in an Iranian prison.

Kupke, 34, a communications specialist, is one of the 52 former hostages who are recuperating from their long Iranian ordeal at the Air Force hospital in Wiesbaden.

"Rick had it real bad, but he's so proud to be free that he says he's feeling no pain now," said his father, Arthur Kupke of Francesville, Ind., who talked with his son three times yesterday in a transatlantic reunion.

Other former hostages found different pleasures. After a diet of beans and rice in captivity, Bert Moore delighted in ordering out for an ice cold beer. And for Jimmy Lopez, who had been forced to sleep in a closet for several months, happiness was a haircut and shave.

Keeping the phone lines buzzing all through the night and all day yesterday, the hostages-turned-heroes were bright and cheery with their relatives, chatting mostly about the euphoria of freedom and the family milestones they had missed.

But the slick surface of the chit-

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Hostages Describe Dark Side

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chat soon began to chip away, showing the pain and shock beneath.

"Those guards were psychotic," one hostage, his voice edged with bitterness, confided in his brother.

"They were SOBs," said Col. Leland Holland, who told his 79-year-old mother Clara he had spent a month in a "dungeon."

A State Department spokesman put it slightly more diplomatically yesterday, accusing the militants of "serious mistreatment" of some of the Americans.

The "students" stole the hostages' personal effects and raided Holland's house in Tehran, taking everything they could carry, from furniture to frozen meat.

"Most of us lost everything," Richard H. Morefield, consul general at the embassy, told his wife in San Diego. "I walked out with my wedding ring, and I had to fight for that."

The militants lied constantly, their captives soon learned, telling the hostages innumerable tall tales about their families and about why "the Great Satan," as they dubbed America, was letting them languish in Iran.

After a few months, the hostages were so confused by a cat's cradle of lies and propaganda that they "ended up believing nothing," political officer Michael J. Metrinko, 34, of Olyphant, Pa., told his brother, Peter, who lives in Arlington.

Each prisoner was treated differently, according to their relative importance in the embassy; their alleged spying activities and their compartment.

Marine Sgt. Johnny McKeel Jr. told his parents in Balch Springs, Texas, that he had assumed until yesterday that his mother was dead, something interrogators had told him in a vain effort to extract information.

When the Marine gave only his name, rank and serial number, a guard knocked out one of his teeth.

Another hostage, 49-year-old Malcolm Kalp of Fairfax County, told his brother he was beaten, put in solitary confinement for months and cut off from any communication with his family because he tried to escape several times.

"They knocked me around a couple of times in the beginning," Robert O. Blucker of North Little Rock, Ark., told his mother Hazel Albin. "But toward the end, I don't think they wanted to beat anyone up unless they could help it."

Lopez, who lost 50 pounds during the ordeal, was forced with several others to sleep in a closet for several months, and Metrinko, Kupke and several others spent long solitary stretches in jail.

After the first few months, however, the torture was more mental than physical.

The guards would bring in the baskets of mail from families, open it and hold up snapshots and letters, and then, before the hostages' bitter gazes, burn the coveted stacks of mail from home.

Richard Queen, who was released after nine months because he contracted multiple sclerosis, yesterday described two frightening occasions when they were forced to line up against the wall and were stripped and searched.

Queen also described a mock execution the hostages were subjected to when the militants pulled the triggers of empty guns.

Another hostage who was released early, Elizabeth Montagne, now an assistant on the China desk at the State Department, talked of "threats with guns," including an incident when the militants played Russian roulette with her and another embassy secretary to try to get information.

William Quarles, one of the 13 hostages released earlier, visited his former colleagues at the hospital yesterday afternoon. Quarles said that one of them told him "they had been kept separated and were moved all over the country, some flown to different parts, some taken by car."

Nearly all of the hostages were reported to have been moved out of the U.S. Embassy compound shortly after the abortive rescue attempt in April.

Most hostages reported being blindfolded and moved at least four times; Rick Kupke told his family he was moved 19 times.

The hostages tried to find ways to communicate with secret codes. Col. Thomas Schaeffer, a military attache, said the hostages used a Russian tapping code with each other to pass messages.

John W. Limbert, a former State Department official from Washington whose son was a hostage, said that John Jr., alone in a cell for nine months, wrote camouflaged letters home. "When he told me he was working on knotty chess problems, I understood that he was in solitary confinement."

Bruce Laingen, the charge d'affaires who remained with two other hostages in the relative comfort of the Foreign Ministry, was able to call home the first few months. Despite the fact that the Iranians monitored the line, Laingen and his wife Penne in Bethesda were able to pass surreptitious messages — that were later passed on to the State Department — by speaking in Thai.

*Washington Star Staff Writers
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